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ABSTRACT

The Learning to Learn Program was designed to help children acquire the abilities for dealing with challenges and problems. The program provides a unique preschool experience for disadvantaged children. The Learning to Learn curriculum has maintained its original characteristics throughout the years and is designed to help children develop appropriate strategies for gathering information, solving problems, and making decisions. Unique practices and materials are used to provide optimum environment in which children can "learn to learn" through manipulation, exploration, and experimentation. The child moves from motor manipulation to development of perceptual imagery, and then to symbolic experiences through the medium of interesting and challenging games and game-like activities. Each day after classes, the director, teacher, and aide meet to discuss the day's activities, special problems, and individual progress of pupils. The most important materials are the language and mathematics games and activities. (Author)

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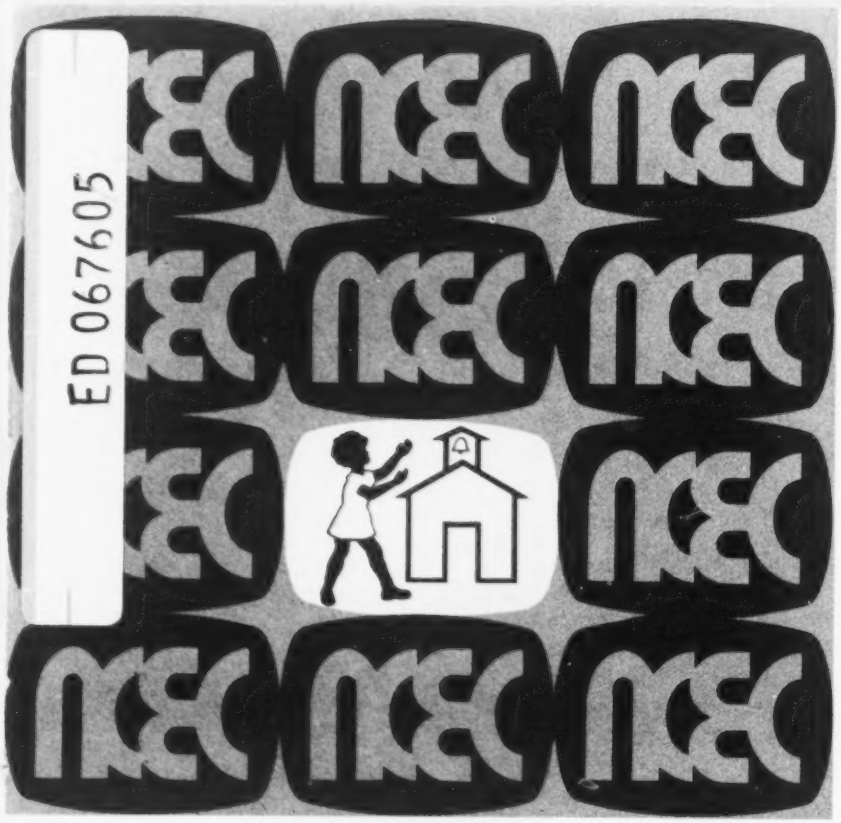

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION, AND WELFARE
Office of Education
National Center for Educational Communication

Model Programs

Compensatory Education

Learning to Learn Program
Jacksonville, Florida

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Model Programs

Compensatory Education

Learning to Learn Program
Jacksonville, Florida

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION, AND WELFARE
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FOREWORD

This is the third in NCEC's *Model Programs* series, whose purpose is to inform educators about successful ongoing programs and to provide them with sufficient information to decide if locally modified replications would be desirable. Included in this series are descriptions of 15 "successful" compensatory education programs for disadvantaged children currently operating in the Nation's schools.

Under contract to the Office of Education, the American Institutes for Research in the Behavioral Sciences, Palo Alto, Calif., identified—through a literature search and nominations by local, State, and national education agencies—over 400 candidate programs in this area. Of this number only 17 met the stringent criteria for success established by AIR in conjunction with OE. It should be noted that most of the programs rejected during the study were not rejected because they were demonstrated failures but rather because their evaluation methodology was so inadequate that a conclusion about success or failure could not be drawn.

Short descriptions of each program in the series have been prepared, covering such topics as context and objectives, personnel, methodology, in-service training, parent involvement, materials and equipment, facilities, schedule, evaluation data, budget, and sources for further information.

Six of the programs in this series were formerly written up in the *It Works* series published by OE in 1969. These six continue to operate successfully, as evidenced by the evaluation data; and since the *It Works* booklets are out of print, the program descriptions have been updated and included in this *Model Programs* series.

Two other programs—Programed Tutorial Reading Project, Indianapolis, Indiana, and Summer Junior High Schools, New York, New York—identified as exemplary compensatory education programs were included in the former *Model Programs* series on reading. Since these program descriptions are still available from the U.S. Government Printing Office, they were not republished for this series.

Two previous *Model Programs* series have been issued—on reading (10 programs) and childhood education (33 programs). Booklets on these programs are available from the Superintendent of Documents, U.S. Government Printing Office, Washington, D.C. 20402, for 15 to 25 cents each.

Learning To Learn Program
Jacksonville, Florida

Overview

The Learning To Learn Program was designed, as its name implies, to help children learn to learn—that is, to acquire the abilities for dealing with challenges and problems. Begun in 1965, the program provides a unique preschool experience for disadvantaged children.

The program is based on three premises regarding children and their education. First, the educational process begins in early childhood, and an organized, systematic, sequential curriculum and curricular materials should be introduced at this time. Second, the first few years of school should provide the child with opportunities to learn to learn, and these opportunities should be of an emotional-social-cognitive nature. Third, every child has an inner drive toward maturity, increased competence, and mastery over his environment, and he looks to adults for behavior and attitudes which are appropriate to this growth. Specific objectives of the program are as follows:

1. To introduce a continuous sequential curriculum founded upon concepts and structures seen as basic to the overall development of young children.

Note.—This program description was adapted from the publication *Learning To Learn Program, Jacksonville, Florida,* published by the Office of Education in 1969, and from additional materials supplied by the director of the program, Dr. Herbert A. Sprigle.

2. To change the traditional role and function of the teacher by emphasizing:
    a. Responsibility for seeing that every child, every day, is exposed to planned learning experiences and materials
    b. Guidance and stimulation which diminish teacher participation and increase conversation and social interaction
    c. Active participation, inquiry, and exploration by the child.
3. To change the traditional role and function of the child by emphasizing:
    a. Development of those inner attributes which enhance learning, attention, concentration, delay before responding, reflection, persistence, effort, etc.
    b. Performance over achievement
    c. Application of knowledge acquired in order to make a contribution to himself and to someone else
    d. Awareness of how he is learning and can utilize himself in learning
    e. Independence through freedom with responsibility
    f. Skill in developing strategies for problem-solving and decision-making
    g. Balanced social, emotional, and intellectual development.
4. To accommodate individual differences in the rate and level of learning by a carefully sequenced curriculum, a variety of curricular materials, and the use of small groups monitored by a teacher who adjusts her teaching methods to these differences.
5. To give the teacher an opportunity to work with small groups and individual children by utilizing teacher assistants.

6. To involve parents and encourage their commitment to the objectives of the program by an active parent education program and by the provision of "homework"-type activities which reinforce the activities and values of the school.

Description

Methodology

The Learning To Learn curriculum has maintained its original characteristics throughout the years. It is designed to help children develop appropriate strategies for gathering information, solving problems, and decisionmaking. Unique techniques and materials are used to provide an optimum environment in which children can "learn to learn" through manipulation, exploration, and experiment. The child moves from motor manipulation to development of perceptual imagery, and then to symbolic experiences through the medium of interesting and challenging games and game-like activities. The games used in the program are constructed around five content areas—clothing, food, animals, furniture, and transportation. Each content area takes the child from concrete activities to more abstract and symbolic activities. Every game or activity engages the child in some kind of active interplay of manipulation, perception, and verbalization.

Learning To Learn teachers are child rather than content oriented. Their roles are carefully defined to reflect the premise that each child has a drive for maturity, competence, and mastery over his environment. They create and maintain an environment where the child can develop independence, responsibility, self-confidence, and respect for himself and others. The two teachers required by the program are assigned to either a small-group or large-group classroom.

The activities that the children are exposed to in both classrooms are similar, but the children are homogeneously grouped in respect to rate and level of learning in the small classroom and heterogeneously grouped in the large classroom. Children are taken four at a time to the smaller room and introduced to new activities and games that are made available to them later in the larger classroom. The activities in the large classroom reinforce, extend, and expand upon what is learned in the small groups.

The child's time and activities in the large classroom are, for the most part, unstructured. For example, following a "morning circle" made up of activities with emotional and social overtones, and "homework" activities brought to school, there is a free activity period for 1½ to 2 hours. Play is the central activity during this time, and children are free to choose what they would do, with a wide variety of materials available. They can stay with an activity as long as they wish and choose their playmates. An aide is in charge of the room.

The uniqueness of this program is the use of a second learning environment where four children and the teacher "play" with sequential curricular materials. Early in the year each group spends 15 minutes there; in the spring the periods are lengthened to 20 or 30 minutes. The primary function of this period is to point up to the child how human interaction and personal involvement are closely linked to learning and must work in harmony for personal and group advantage.

The primary purpose of the curriculum of the program is not to fill the child with facts and information. The focus is on the learner and the learning process, with the content serving only as a vehicle.

Staff Planning and Inservice Training

Each day after classes are dismissed, the director, teacher, and aide meet to discuss the day's activities, special problems, and individual progress of pupils, and to plan the next day's activities. A videotape of the day's classroom activities is viewed, and the director critiques the lesson as part of the staff's daily inservice training. Where the videotape reveals inconsistencies between practice and theory, modifications in procedures are discussed and the following day's plan adjusted accordingly.

Materials

The most important materials are the language and mathematics games and activities which help to give the curriculum its unique character. Published by Science Research Associates, these are contained in two kits. Each kit consists of a detailed teacher's manual and the items necessary for each sequenced curriculum activity. The materials are required for all of the small-group work and eventually become available to the entire class during the free-activity period.

In addition to these special materials, the following are used: electric typewriters (e.g., for spelling exercises during free-activity time); tape recorders with earphones for listening to and recording stories; blocks; writing, drawing, and painting equipment (including felt-tip markers, pencils, crayons, chalk, and paints); phonograph records for music-rhythm activities; and children's books for storytime and home use.

Personnel

Program director—The director manages the program, trains and supervises the program's instructional staff, and develops the special games and materials used. He also assumes the duties of bus driver to transport the children to and from school.

Program evaluators—The evaluation of the program is performed by an independent evaluation team of two persons from the University of Florida.

Teacher—The full-time qualified teacher plans and organizes daily lessons and participates in continuous inservice training and daily staff planning sessions.

Teacher aide—The salaried, full-time teacher aide works with the children when they need help or want to talk to an adult. The teacher aide also helps in daily planning and organization of instructional activities.

Testing personnel—Four qualified examiners administer tests to all the children and also score the tests.

The program also employs a full-time secretary and a full-time maid who also prepares the daily snack.

Parent Involvement

Parent participation is a prominent feature of the program. A monthly meeting for parents is held in the classroom at a time convenient to the parents (Sunday afternoon at 3 o'clock). The teacher, teacher aide, and director are present at every meeting to help the parents. The program itself is nondirective and parent-child-classroom oriented. The focus of the program is on the individual child and what the staff is trying to accomplish.

There are usually three parts to the initial meeting: general announcements, videotapes followed by parent discussions, and a demonstration of the curriculum and how it relates to suggested home activities.

After viewing videotapes of the large classroom and the small groups, the parents find it easier to talk about their own child. They learn how to conduct the activities to be done at home. They identify with the teacher role, and develop a feeling of respect for the teacher and trust in her ability to provide cognitive, emotional, and social growth.

In summary, the parent education program is designed to (1) create and maintain a learning environment at home, (2) instill the school's values in the home, where most learning occurs, (3) move the parents to an active commitment to education, (4) establish a closer parent-child relationship, and (5) establish communication between school and home through a parent-teacher relationship that fosters mutual respect and confidence.

Evaluation and Followup

During the 1965–66 school year three matched groups of children were assigned to one of three groups: (1) an experimental group that received the Learning To Learn Program, (2) a control group that received a traditional preschool program, and (3) a second control group that received no formal training. Data collected at the end of the first year indicated that the children who attended the Learning To Learn Program scored significantly higher than the other two

groups on 19 developmental measures which included the Stanford-Binet Intelligence Scale, Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test, and the Illinois Test of Psycholinguistic Abilities. The following year the three groups attended first grade in the public schools. Seventeen developmental measures including the Stanford-Binet, Wechsler Intelligence Scale for Children, Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test, and the Illinois Test of Psycholinguistic Abilities were again administered to the three groups at the end of the first grade. Fifteen of the 17 measures indicated that the Learning To Learn group was still significantly superior in its performance when compared to the other two groups.

Since the *It Works* description of the program, followup comparisons for the three groups have been reported at the end of the second and third grades. Comparisons on the basis of the Wechsler Intelligence Scale for Children, Stanford Achievement Test, and the Illinois Test of Psycholinguistic Abilities indicated that the differences between the groups steadily decreased to the point that most were no longer statistically significant.

A new program began in 1968 when four new matched groups of children were assigned to one of the following groups: (1) a group of 4-year-olds who were to receive the Learning To Learn Program for 3 years, (2) a group of 4-year-olds who were to receive a traditional preschool, kindergarten, and grade one program, (3) a group of 5-year-olds who were to receive the Learning To Learn Program in kindergarten and first grade but would attend a traditional second-grade class, and (4) a control group of 5-year-olds who were to receive traditional kindergarten through grade two instruction. One of the primary purposes of this new study is to determine if an extended Learning To Learn experience, 2 years for the experi-

mental 5-year-olds, will be more beneficial and lasting in its effects than the earlier 1-year program. The results to date indicate that the Learning To Learn 4-year-olds and 5-year-olds have made significantly greater progress developmentally during the first 2 years of the program than their matched control groups.

The Learning To Learn Program has consistently been found to be superior to traditional training programs when comparisons are made immediately after 1 or 2 years of exposure. However, the only followup results reported to date indicate that the superiority of the Learning To Learn children over matched control groups tends to wash out with the passage of more than a year without the special program. Final conclusions should, therefore be reserved until the current study is completed and more followup data are reported.

Replications

The Learning To Learn curriculum materials are being used extensively throughout the country. The project director reports, however, that he is unaware of any complete replication of the program.

Sources for Further Information

Further information on the program can be obtained from:

Dr. Herbert A. Sprigle
Learning To Learn School, Inc.
1936 San Marco Boulevard
Jacksonville, Fla. 32207
(904) 396-2334

References

Van De Riet, V. and H. *A Follow-up Evaluation of the Effects of a Unique Sequential Learning Program, a Traditional Preschool Program, and a No-Treatment Program on Culturally Deprived Children.* Final Report to U.S. Department of Health, Education, and Welfare. December 1969. (ED 042 516)

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Van De Riet, V., Van De Riet, H., and Resnick, M. *A Sequential Approach to Early Childhood and Elementary Education, Phase II.* Grant Report to U.S. Department of Health, Education, and Welfare, Project Head Start, Division of Research and Evaluation. December 1970.

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MODEL PROGRAMS—Compensatory Education Series

Fifteen promising compensatory education programs for the disadvantaged are included in this series. Following is a list of the programs and their locations:

College Bound Program, New York, N.Y.
Diagnostic Reading Clinic, Cleveland, Ohio
The Fernald School Remediation of Learning Disorders Program, Los Angeles, Calif.
Higher Horizons 100, Hartford, Conn.
The Juan Morel Campos Bilingual Center, Chicago, Ill.
Learning To Learn Program, Jacksonville, Fla.
More Effective Schools Program, New York, N.Y.
Mother-Child Home Program, Freeport, N.Y.
Preschool Program, Fresno, Calif.
Project Conquest, East St. Louis, Ill.
Project Early Push, Buffalo, N.Y.
Project MARS, Leominster, Mass.
Project R-3, San Jose, Calif.
PS 115 Alpha One Reading Program, New York, N.Y.
Remedial Reading Laboratories, El Paso, Texas

Two programs also identified for this series were described in the *Model Programs—Reading* series: Programed Tutorial Reading Project, Indianapolis, Indiana, and Summer Junior High Schools, New York, New York. Since these program descriptions are still current and available from the Superintendent of Documents, U.S. Government Printing Office, they were not rewritten for this series.